

I have been requested to state why I am a Christian. Space would not permit me to begin to tell all, but I will endeavor to give the two principal reasons for serving Christ, whose I am.

*First, I am a Christian, because in Christ Jesus I find the only answer to the pleading cries of my heart.* I was in the dark. My heart cried out for the light. Confucius, Buddha, Plato, Socrates, and other great teachers and philosophers took me by the hand and led me stumblingly along life's way, until we came at last to the verge of the Valley of Death. There they left me in the gloom. They could lead me no further. When I longed most for the light, behold, they left me in the bitterest darkness. It was then that Jesus took my hand. He halted not at the gates to the valley, but passed on into its blackness. At once, the deep dark became a shadow,—only a shadow in the valley,—a shadow so thin that I beheld Him walking in the glory beyond. And now, when the time comes and I am called to pass thru the vale, I can go to sleep in His arms like a babe at evening time upon its mother's breast, for I know He knows the way, and will carry me safely over unto the perfect day.

I was impure. My heart cried out for purity. Like a drop of water in the filthy gutter of a great city, so I lay in the world's filth, with no one to answer my prayer for cleansing. Then shone forth the Sun of Righteousness in all His glory. Breaking the dark clouds above me, I felt the warm rays of His love falling upon me. I felt myself lifted by some unseen power, out of the mire and wafted away above the world of sin, like a dew drop in the bosom of the sky. Pure, only because He has made me pure. Holy, because I rest in the bosom of the Eternal. I was thirsty. My heart cried out for the satisfying waters. I drank of the streams that flow thru the hot sands of this world, ever to thirst again and the more. O, how I longed for the living water! Finally I found and drank of the streams that burst forth from His bosom. Now, I have a love, a peace, a joy, a rest, that satisfies. I want no more, save that which I have made perfect. And so now, every cry that rings forth from my heart, which was as "an infant, wailing in the night," finds an answer in Him, who came forth from God.

*My second and greatest reason for being a Christian, is simply because He loved me so.* I saw the Lord of Glory hanging in agonies of blood upon the cursed tree. I asked, "Why hangs Innocence upon this cruel, cruel tree?" A voice within replied, "Dying, dying, for thee." Knowing this, tho I was base, I was not so base as not to love the Man who died for me. Tho I was vile, yet not so vile as to spurn the purest, sweetest and most unselfish love mortals have ever known. I love Him because He first loved me. My love is born of His love. And today, if there is anything within me that is good, His love has made that good.

If there is any unselfishness within, it is only the echo of His own unselfishness. If I have sweet abiding life, that life is mine because "Christ liveth in me." All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to the everlasting love of the precious Christ, my Lord and my God!

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#### OBSTACLES

*Synopsis of a sermon preached by Martin Shively, Lathrop, California.*

TEXT—St. John 11:39: Jesus said, Take ye away the stone.

Those who are acquainted with their Bibles know under what circumstances Jesus spoke these words. But for the benefit of those who do not, I will recite them briefly. At Bethany there was a certain household comprising two sisters and one brother. And at this time the man, whose name was Lazarus, fell sick and the sisters were in great anxiety lest some turn of the disease should prove fatal. They no doubt had the best medical attendance, but Lazarus continued to grow worse, and the sisters sent Jesus a message, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Yet they did not dare to ask him to come tho they were evidently looking for him every day with eager eyes. They had given up hope so far as medicine was concerned, and their only hope was Jesus. But in spite of all their tenderness, in spite of all that could be done by hands prompted by loving hearts, their brother died leaving them without any male protector whatever. This brother had been everything to them, and they had learned to lean heavily on his shoulder for he was their only support. The neighbors came in to comfort them and told them that Lazarus was a good man and he was ready to die, but the sisters wouldn't be consoled, they wanted Lazarus.

Several days after he was buried Jesus was seen coming toward Bethany, and Martha went to meet him and fell at his feet, crying, "Master, it is too late; if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." And Mary the other sister said unto him likewise, "If the Master had only been here a few days ago." But Jesus said, "Where have ye laid him?" Then they led him to the tomb which was a cave and a stone was laid upon it. Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone." And the people were astonished because he had been dead four days and decomposition had set in and he wouldn't be fit to be seen. But behind that stone thru which no human eye could see, Jesus saw, not a dead man, but a living soul entombed alive, only waiting for that stone which barred the entrance to be rolled away. So he said, "Take ye away the stone." And when they had done it he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." And out there walked not a spirit but a living man clothed in the habiliments of the dead.

So I believe that Jesus is here tonight and is saying to every man "Take ye away the stone." He will not call our loved ones from the grave but behind every stone that bars the spiritual development of man Jesus sees great possibilities of a spiritual life and says, "Take ye away the stone." We know there are those who are dead in trespasses and sins and some cases that we would call hopeless ones. But Jesus can see what the eye of man cannot. Let us notice what some of these stones are.

First, there is the stone of indifference. Why are the seats of this church not all filled? There are plenty of people in the community to fill them and one reason why they are not here is that they are indifferent. If a political leader should come to the town the people would flock to hear him and huzza till they were hoarse. And if some one would talk about making money people would be all ears lest they should miss one word. I am not quarreling with them about this, but I want to know why they are not more anxious to hear about that which is their highest good. It is the stone of indifference and it must be rolled away. For no man can be saved until he desires above every thing else to be saved.

Then there is the stone of unbelief. Some say that they can't believe because they can't understand the incarnation of God. But there is no subject that we understand perfectly. We say we understand all about the human body. But can any one explain *how* the food we ate for supper is transformed into flesh and blood? We know that it is done, we know that it goes thru several processes and is changed gradually but we can't understand just *how*. It reminds me also of the Christian evangelist who said to a vast assemblage, "Is there any man here who does not believe in a Hereafter?" In the farther end of the building a man jumped up on a seat and yelled "Here is such a man." "Well," said the evangelist, "I am glad you are here. Will you please step up here on the platform, the people would like to see a man whose mother died like a dog?" "You are a liar, sir; my mother is dead and gone to heaven," the man said hotly. Then he saw what he had done, that he had given himself away.

It is a notable fact that as long as a man is prosperous, the sun is shining and everybody promises to live a thousand years he can easily profess his unbelief. But let a member of his family die and he wants a Christian minister. We want to hide the skeleton of unbelief then. But we need an anchor of hope in life as well as in death. A religion that is good enough to die by is good enough to live by.

The next stone is called the stone of ignorance. Those who decry the Bible and its teaching the most will often quote verses which never did exist. Perhaps they will have a few words and the rest is according to their own imagination. Those who are most better and violent in fighting against